

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 3938

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: VIEWS OF BRITISH AND GERMAN AMBASSADORS ON CURRENT CRISIS

1. EVENINGS JULY 11 I INVITED BRITISH AND GERMAN AMBASSADORS OVER TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON LATEST CRISIS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO SEE IF THERE WAS ANY CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION WE COULD TAKE. TOLD THEM I HAD ALREADY OFFERED TO HAVE HIGH VISIBILITY MEETING WITH SOARES IF HE THOUGHT IT USEFUL (REPLY WHICH CAME LATER INDICATED HE DID NOT - SEE SEPTTEL.)

2. GERMAN AMBASSADOR SHARED MY VIEW THAT CRISIS WAS WATERSHED FOR SOCIALISTS; THEY HAD TO ACT TO TRANSFORM THEIR ELECTORAL STRENGTH INTO POLITICAL POWER OR THE REST WOULD ALL BE DOWNHILL FOR THEM. BRITISH AMBASSADOR, WHILE AGREEING CRISIS WAS REAL, STILL THOUGHT SOMEONE MIGHT COME UP WITH FACE-SAVING SOLUTION IN WHICH MATTERS WOULD GO ON AS ALWAYS. HE THOUGHT REAL CRUNCH WOULD NOT COME UNTIL ECONOMIC CRISIS, WHICH HE SEES AS A FEW MONTHS OFF.

3. I PRESSED THEM BOTH VERY HARD ON WHETHER THERE WAS NOT SOMEONE WE SHOULD SEE TO MAKE OUR VIEWS KNOWN AND TO EXERCISE OUR INFLUENCE. THEY THOUGHT VISIT TO COSTA GOMES (SOCIALISTS HAD ALREADY RECOMMENDED THAT GERMAN AMBASSADOR PROTEST REPUBLICA CASE TO COSTA GOMES, A MOVE WHICH FRG DECIDED NOT TO MAKE), WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME. THEY THINK COSTA GOMES HAS LITTLE INFLUENCE,
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AND IN ANY EVENT IS UNWILLING TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED WHEN THE

CHIPS ARE DOWN. AN APPROACH TO VASCO GONCALVES WOULD BE LIKE TALKING TO THE ENEMY. ALL OTHERS ON REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL WOULD BE INCLINED TO DUCK THE ISSUE, EXCEPT MELO ANTUNES WHO IS LEADING THE CHARGE FOR THE MODERATES AND COULD BE DAMAGED BY OVERT ASSOCIATION WITH US AT THE MOMENT.

4. TOLD THEM I HAD RECOMMENDED PUBLIC COMMENT FOR USG. GERMAN THOUGHT BONN WOULD PROBABLY COMMENT, ALTHOUGH HE HAD MADE NO RECOMMENDATION TO THIS EFFECT. BRITISH AMBASSADOR SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD PROBABLY WAIT TO SEE WHAT SOARES'S DESIRES WERE.

5. COMMENT: I AGREE THAT IT IS HARD TO FIND ANY USEFUL POWER CENTERS TO DEAL WITH IN GOP. BUT I AM MORE INCLINED THAN MY COLLEAGUES TO THINK THAT IF EVER THERE WAS A TIME FOR THE EUROPEANS (AND POSSIBLY THE US) TO EXERCISE WHAT INFLUENCE WE HAVE LEFT THE MOMENT IS NOW. THE BATTLE LINES ARE BEING DRAWN MORE CLEARLY THAN EVER BEFORE. IF, AND I UNDERSCORE THE IF, OUR FRIENDS THINK SOME ACTION MAY BE HELPFUL AND WE JUDGE THAT ACTION TO BE IN OUR OVERALL INTEREST AND WITHIN THE PROPER BOUNDS OF DIPLOMACY, I THINK WE SHOULD MOVE -- HOPEFULLY, WITH THE EUROPEANS IN FRONT. I AND MY STAFF WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE SOUNDINGS THIS WEEK TO SEE IF THERE ARE ANY SUCH ACTIONS.
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